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Senator Stennis Civil Rights Correspondence B03F34L01

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FEBRUARY 28, 1963

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The President's special message on civil rights contains recommendations so extreme and unconstitutional that the Congress should not seriously consider them.

If these shocking proposals are adopted, many clear and basic provisions of the Constitution would be trampled and ignored.

For instance, it is proposed that the mere filing of a voting rights suit -- however groundless and frivolous -- would authorize in certain cases the appointment of temporary federal referees to register persons to vote in that county -- without a trial, without a court hearing or without any judicial finding that the laws have been violated. This proposal clearly ignores the sole right of the states to determine the qualifications of electors. I cannot think of a more flagrant violation of the Constitution.

Further, it is proposed that literacy be presumed where an applicant to vote possesses a sixth grade education. Even the Supreme Court has recognized the right of the states to impose a reasonable literacy test, and the Federal Government has no authority whatever in this field.

And it is proposed to extend the life of the Civil Rights Commission which will die a natural and long awaited death on November 30. Extending the life of this commission for four years as proposed -- or even four hours -- would be a great disservice to the Nation. Not one compelling reason has ever been shown for its creation or continued existence, but now it is proposed that it be turned into a "national civil rights clearing house" with broad new powers to meddle into the affairs of our state and local governments.

There are many other far-reaching recommendations which I will discuss on the Senate floor at the proper time, including the proposal to give priority

to voting rights suits in the federal courts, the "little FEPC", the proposed amendment of the Land-Grant College Act, so-called technical and financial assistance to school districts which desegregate and recent executive and administrative action withholding federal funds from certain housing projects, airports, defense contractors, colleges and teachers institutes -- in other words, blackmail and bribery with the power, might and money of the federal government.

If this legislation should ever be considered on the Senate floor, then I predict its overwhelming defeat, and I am ready to do my part to make certain that every Senator is made aware of its unconstitutional and unsavory character.

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